1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

ever, contributed not only many slaves called by the name of that river, but also the *Mayombés*, the *Mousombés*, and the *Mondongues*, though the "true Congos" — the *Franc-Congos* — are listed as having been derived from Angola. As for the rest of the continent, "One does not see at all in Santo Domingo any Africans who have come from the remainder of the west coast of Africa, which ends at the Cape of Good Hope. . . ."[8]

No final answer can be given about the extent to which these lists of tribal names may be regarded as valid, but the unanimity with which not only Charlevoix and St. Mery, but such other contemporary observers as Bryan Edwards for Jamaica, the Reverend C. G. A. Oldendorps for the Virgin Islands, John G. Stedman and Jan Jacob Hartsinck for Guiana — to name only four — recorded similar African regions and similar tribal names when writing of the slaves of other parts of the New World, offers strong corroborative testimony. Moreover, the fact that every tribal designation given in the lists of Charlevoix and St. Mery can be found on present-day maps of Africa in the approximate region they had indicated confirms the accuracy of these early lists.

The characteristics of the various types of Negroes recorded by Charlevoix and St. Mery are not without interest. The Senegalese are described as tall and well made, and of an ebony color, their noses almost as straight as those of whites, their hair less tightly curled than that of other Negroes. They had the reputation of possessing a superior morality and were deemed warrior-like. St. Mery had nothing but the highest praise for the Senegalese slave.

> "He is a farmer, intelligent, good, faithful even in love, understanding, and makes an excellent domestic. Living on millet, maize, and rice, he is very sober, excellent in caring for animals, discreet, and above all taciturn, a quality sufficiently rare among the Africans and

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which one does not find often enough even among civilized peoples."

Not all of the Mohammedan slaves, however, had the desirable qualities of the Senegalese. The Bambara, for example, were depicted as insolent and not always to be trusted, as the designations " those who steal turkeys " and " those who steal sheep " would seem to indicate.

The people between Sierra Leone and the Ivory Coast were known as a hardy group prone to revolt and desertion; they were not held desirable as slaves, and thus it is not strange that few of them were found in the colony. A similar appraisal was made of the Gold Coast Negroes, for while they were described as generally well made and intelligent, they were also assessed as unreliable, deceitful, lazy, given to flattery, great consumers of food, drunkards, and wantons. And as for the Fanti and the Mina, they were spoken of as " extremely proud, waging constant warfare, capricious, and ready at any time to commit suicide."

The Negroes of the Slave Coast were favorites in Santo Domingo. Their characteristic lighter skin-color, to be observed at the present time in their peculiar yellowish or reddish hue, confirms their provenience. They were thought intelligent but avaricious, and were designated as " eaters of dogs." The Ardra women, " continuous talkers," and quarrelsome, were rarely employed as domestics, since the Negroes from the region of Dahomey apparently learned French with the greatest of difficulty, so that to understand their speech was considered to be the greatest test " for those who flatter themselves that they have command of Créole."

The Ibos were found excellent for work in the fields, yet difficult to manage, for the slightest fault-finding or ridicule caused them to commit suicide,

" the idea of which, far from terrifying them, seems to hold an attraction for them, for they believe in the trans-

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> migration of souls. Too often it has come about that the *Ibos* of a given plantation have agreed all to hang themselves, in order to return to their country."

So well recognized was this tendency of the Ibo slaves to commit suicide, that they were described in Créole by the formula: "*Ibos pend' cor' a yo*—The Ibos (are those who) hang themselves." None the less, many slaves from this tribe were acquired. Their strong communal and tribal ties made it advantageous for those who owned them to obtain more of them, since newcomers "were accorded help, care, and instruction by those who had preceded them."

According to St. Mery, the Negroes most common in the colony came from the Congo coast and Angola, and were known by the generic term *Congos*. The *Franc-Congos*, who came from the kingdoms of Congo and Angola, were

> "of a docility and gayety that makes them much desired. Loving song, dance, and ornaments, they make excellent domestics, while their intelligence, their facility in speaking a pure Créole, their jovial countenances without markings . . . cause people to prefer them for house-servants; they also make good laborers and good fishermen."

That the large numbers of Congo Negroes imported into Haiti have left no more of the elements of their culture in the island than are found is perhaps due to this very devotion to their masters, for a lively tradition of the present tells how, during the slave revolts, the Congo Negroes most often remained on the side of their masters and most often betrayed their fellows.

Not all the Negroes from the Congo area were as amiable as these just mentioned. The *Mondongos* had "the most execrable excess of eating their fellows." This quotation gains special significance because of the prominence which it has

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maintain adequate hygienic conditions, the health of these children was usually poor, so that from earliest infancy they were spoiled by their parents and servants; their least wishes were gratified, and their least complaints immediately rectified so as to make them petty tyrants in their households. This tyranny was most often exercised over the family slaves. Regardless of the assiduous care these young despots received, and despite the adulation lavished upon their young charges, the Negro servants were seldom sufficiently prompt or adequate in their attentiveness to escape the punishments, often severe, that were meted out to them at the behest of their young masters. This tyranny extended to the play-life of the young Haitian-born white. Surrounded only by the slave children of the plantation, he commanded his contemporaries even more imperiously than his parents commanded the grown slaves.

> " Whatever he saw, he wanted, whatever was shown him he demanded; and if some fatality brought it about that one of his small companions resisted him and he became irritated, they would hurry from all sides in response to his cries and those of the young unfortunate, who, his color having destined him for submission, learned soon enough that he would be forced to give way, perhaps even being meted some punishment to penalize the disobedience of one who had not yet the instinct for servitude." [27]

175 563 567 571 [839]

Grown to manhood, the young Créole continued to act as master of all he surveyed. Imperious, quick-tempered, spoiled, his life lived in large part among slaves, when his sex drive stirred, he took what slave women pleased him. Eventually he married, to be tormented with the thoughts of the possible infidelity of his wife; the more tortured because of his extreme vanity and because, while demanding faithfulness from his spouse, he was continuing his affairs with his Negro women.

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Yet he had some excellences of character, as well. " Frank,

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affable, generous perhaps to the point of ostentation, confident, brave, a sure friend and a good father " [28] — such are his good points as set down by one who was perhaps surer-eyed than others in seeing his deficiencies, though these traits seem to have concerned more his relations with his fellow-whites than those which affected his bearing toward his Negro slaves.

The young Créole women of this same environment were destined for early marriage — too early for their best development, whether physical or mental. Given to exacting the fulfillment of their slightest caprices, they were, like their men, creatures of passion. If they survived their first pregnancies, which as a result of too early marriages often came before they were physically in condition to support the rigors of childbirth, they soon lost their youthful allure and became the unattractive women of the type so maliciously described by the Comte de C***.[29] In such cases they frequently survived not one but several husbands. Their associations were chiefly with their Negro women slaves, who were full confidantes, sleeping in the same chamber with their mistresses and on occasion sharing informal meals with them, though they never ate at the same table. And because, by a fine turn of irony, these Negro women were often at the same time the concubines of the husbands, brothers, or sons of their mistresses, they were as often as not treated alternately with the greatest tenderness and the harshest brutality.[30]

Whatever the inner life of white Haitians, native-born or Créole, outward ostentation was the rule. In the cities poorly furnished houses were cared for by a numerous retinue of uniformed retainers; " the supreme achievement for a European being to have himself served, he hires slaves while he waits for the time when he can own them." [31] In the country, too, life was lived on as lavish a scale as possible. This is not the place to describe the houses of masters and slaves, or the buildings needed for working sugar-cane or indigo or preparing coffee, or their distribution over the plantation, for nu-

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"The Mina Negroes have even been seen to recognize princes of their country . . . prostrating themselves at their feet and rendering them that homage whose contrast to the state of servitude to which these princes have been reduced in the colony offers a striking enough instance of the instability of human greatness." [17]

Yet another group of Africans played a significant role in determining the trends Haitian Negro culture was to take. It is a commonplace among those who have studied New World Negro life that African religion has shown greater resistance to white influence than any other phase of African culture. And to explain this one must again turn to native African tradition. The beginnings of the West African monarchies, whose ruling dynasties eventually came to command great stretches of land, were in tiny principalities that continually "warred" against each other. Tradition has it that the most intransigent of the conquered were the priests of the indigenous local cults, who, because of their activities, were punished with what native idiom still terms "banishment." In the New World these intractable priests continued their rites for their fellow-slaves and instructed the next generation so their knowledge would not be lost to the people. Before their enslavement they had been men of power and influence, and this pattern, carried over in all its strength in the New World, continued them and their descendants as natural leaders. Hence, wherever the opportunity presented itself to strike for liberty, they invoked the spiritual forces to reinforce the power and courage of the military leaders who, like them, had been sold into slavery because their countries had been conquered, or because they had rebelled against the succession in their own lands.

The composition of the slave population as inferred from these traditions is thus seen to be somewhat different from

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that commonly assumed, since the conclusion is inescapable that, if anything, the slaves formed a group whose aboriginal types showed a weighting on the upper end of the African social scale rather than an overwhelming proportion of the less desirable members of society. Such an assumption goes far in explaining how the "slave psychology" generally attributed to Negroes of the New World was anything but a real part of their inner lives, and makes as well for an understanding of the extent to which the Negroes suffered their slavery with a constantly active discontent that is rarely given proper recognition in the study of the history of the period, and to which the drive toward freedom and the traditions of their native land were kept alive despite the restraints imposed by the masters.

Once in the net of the slavers, however, the status of any individual mattered but little, for to the European dealers each Negro was but an added unit of cargo. All last traces of his dignity as a human being were taken from him;[18] in the grants for earlier slaving operations, and in the manifests of the ships of that time, slaves were not even invoiced as human beings, but as "pieces of the Indies" — fractions of the perfect slave, who was conceived as having a height of seven *quartas* of a little more than ten inches each. Under this practice, the stature of each slave, child or adult, having been recorded, the total length of the members of the cargo was divided by the requisite number, and thus reduced to so many of these "pieces of the Indies," the actual number of human beings in the cargo not figuring.[19]

It is unnecessary to detail the horrors of the passage to the New World, for the story has been too often told. One can but conjecture what its effect on those subjected to it must have been, especially when it is viewed as an introduction to their contact with the Europeans who were to be their masters. That the mortality on the voyage was high is well known, but death encountered while the shackled slaves passed the dan-

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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177 been murdered, as in 1937); and the Dominican influence can be seen in northeastern Haiti. The country as a whole, however, remains largely free from non-Haitian influence. This isolation may not continue for many more years, for successive administrations expand their health activities, try to improve economic methods, extend transportation facilities, and pursue policies of "enlightenment." Under such a regimen there will be an inevitable contact either with the experts from foreign countries or with the products of the civilization of those countries. And if Haiti should acquire foreign machines in large numbers, she would inevitably open herself to the dynamic influences which accompany a changing economy.

177 105 Such a possibility is in the near future, so that social scientists will shortly have the chance to observe cultural contact and diffusion at work. What is more immediately to the point is the query as to how much diffusion of cultural traits occurred at the beginning of Haitian national life. How much of the African tribal culture persisted through slavery and the period of forced labor into the Haiti of small properties and peasantry? How much, on the other hand, is a borrowing from the French ways of colonial times? These questions have been treated in earlier chapters, but may be here summarized. The external structure of social institutions, particularly those which characterize the life of the élite, is clearly French. Haitian government and law, upper-class marriage, the Catholic religion—all these have a French provenance. Conversely, among the masses, the Vodun religion and possibly certain economic devices (such as the coumbite) stem from Africa. Yet the round of daily life among the people is quite obviously unlike that of any single African group from which slaves were drawn, nor is it a composite of African folkways.[7] Similarly, although the bulk of the population is peasantry, the Haitian peasant is not at all a transplanted French peasant. The folkways and mores of rural Haiti are, to a degree unusual in most countries, products of local experience, uncolored by outside influence.[8]

● 157 Students of race find in writings about Haiti the usual sum of generalizations about the temperament and mental characteristics of

[567] 7. It must be emphasized that the Haitian slaves were drawn from at least thirty-eight African groups. See J. G. Leyburn, "The Making of a Black Nation," in G. P. Murdock, ed., *Essays in the Science of Society* (New Haven, 1937), pp. 377–394.

8. Herskovits' theory of the African origin of certain Haitian traits has been discussed above, pp. 199–201.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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a whole people. The Negroes, as distinct from the people of lighter color, are genial or kindly or lighthearted, as white authors have often said American Negroes were. But are they? If so, how does it happen that people of a certain skin color have distinct mental traits? If the generalizations are false, how does it happen that the same characteristics have been attributed to Negroes in both countries? Are the distinctive temperaments of people in different nations merely imagined, or are they real? And if real, are they taken on as a part of culture or inherent in the blood?

The United States is gradually beginning to be aware of the republics which lie to the south of her. Haiti is not as large or important as her neighboring states, but more than many others her future depends upon this country. The sociologist will find her three million citizens worthy of study.

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